

# KidCitizen Teacher's Guide

# Community Helpers

How have community helpers changed and stayed the same over time? We will explore a photograph of a man delivering ice to a schoolhouse around 1900 and investigate who community helpers are, and how they have changed over time.



Children crossing street with police officer  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/hec2013014729/>

## Essential Question

Who are community helpers, and how have they changed over time?

## TPS Connections

The importance of community helpers is a building block of civics understanding. In this episode, children investigate who community helpers are, and how they have changed over time through exploration of a rich photograph (from the Library of Congress) of a man delivering ice to a schoolhouse in 1899. Children explore the photograph by revealing it in sections, observing the details they find (**See**), and working with in-game character Ella to figure out what jobs the helpers are doing. Children collect elements of the photograph to their journal, and use what they have collected to help them decide what the jobs are (**Think**), and then to connect those jobs with community helpers today (**Wonder**).

## Curricular Connections

### NCSS Standards

II. Time, Continuity, and Change

X. Civic Ideals and Practice

### C3 Framework

D2.Civ.2.K-2. Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community

D2.Civ.6.K-2. Describe how communities work to accomplish common tasks, establish responsibilities, and fulfill roles of authority

D2.Civ.14.K-2. Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time

D2.His.2.K-2. Compare life in the past to life today.

## Historical Background

Before people had access to ice on a daily basis, they canned food or used underground ice pits to preserve it. They saved ice from the winter and stored it in these places in the hotter months to help prevent food from spoiling. This was the primary technique available to most people during much of the 19th century.

This slowly changed as big operations like Tudor Ice Company and Knickerbocker Ice Company began harvesting ice during the winter, storing it in icehouses and then shipping the 100-pound blocks by barge, ship or train to places like New York City, Savannah, Georgia and even Havana, Cuba. Upon arrival they were stored in specially constructed warehouses to keep the ice from melting until the next shipment arrived. Different groups bought the ice including restaurants, meat packing companies, stores, and fishermen who could stay out longer if they packed the fish they caught in ice (Weightman, 2003).

One important group of customers were private households. As cities like New York, Chicago, and Charleston grew in population the demand for ice year-round grew as well. The invention of the icebox helped to fuel this demand. These early refrigeration units consisted of a wooden box insulated with zinc, cork, seaweed, straw or other material. It had a compartment at the top for the ice and a compartment with shelves below for perishable items. A major challenge was how to handle water from the melting ice. A drip pan under the unit emptied regularly

often served that purpose. While a bit cumbersome to operate these units did allow for the extended preservation of foodstuffs during the summer months (DeForest Area Historical Society, 2010; Rees, 2013, p. 163).

Getting the ice to customers was an important aspect of the responsibilities of the ice companies. To accomplish this task the businesses employed both private individuals and company hired operators to deliver the ice. They drivers arrived very early in the morning at a central distribution point, loaded up to 10 tons of ice into the wagons and headed out on their routes. For many immigrant groups relocating to these cities delivering ice was an important occupation (Robertson, 2010). It was a job that required a strong back as the primary necessary skill. Learning the delivery route did not take long as fresh ice was delivered to each home several times a week. The ice blocks only lasted a couple of days before melting. Because they traveled the routes so regularly it was not usual for the horses pulling the wagons to automatically stop in front of each place of delivery without instructions from the deliveryman.

The tools needed to do the job were straightforward and limited in quantity. Most icemen carried a piece of leather, a heavy cloth or a sheepskin to reduce the amount of water they got on themselves. To lift and carry the blocks of ice they had a large pair of tongs to grasp either side of the block. They also had an ice pick to chip away at the 100-pound blocks to make sure it fit properly into the icebox. To inform the deliveryman of how much ice they needed a card was positioned in the window. It had a place on it to put different numbers to indicate the amount of ice needed that day. The iceman then cut the ice to fit the order, threw it over his shoulder and carried it to the customer. Some icemen kept a scale to check the weight, but most men after a while could accurately estimate the proper weight of the ice.

Wrestling with the ice made most icemen quite strong especially after daily carrying ice up several flights of stairs to make their deliveries. The frequency of their deliveries made them a recognizable and welcomed member of the communities they served. Their customers depended on their deliveries in order to keep their food from rotting. When they were away some households even allowed the iceman to enter their homes and make the delivery. Others people put a special box outside of their home in which to place the ice to insure they received it (Peninsula Ice History, n.d.).

Neighborhood children especially were happy to see the iceman coming. Watching him do his work was a pleasant diversion. Even better was when he

chipped ice from the block and gave pieces of it to the children to suck on to cool themselves. When he didn't voluntarily give them pieces the children sometimes secretly got into the back of his wagon and took pieces as a treat. Having ice also meant their families had one of the main ingredients necessary for making a special treat-- ice cream (Jordan, 2009, pp. 7-8; Roehm, 2006).

The ice wagon remained a steady part of the neighborhood environment in this country well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was a pleasant memory of adults across the country. Its importance began to diminish however after World War I as the creation of improved technology for refrigerators became available. Moreover, as the use of electricity spread and electric refrigerators and freezers became more reliable as well as less expensive the need for ice wagons diminished. By the end of World War II ice delivery had virtually vanished. The ice deliveryman and his wagon were no longer deemed necessary, and a once indispensable part of the community disappeared (Rees, 2013, p. 163).

## Bibliography

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## Primary Sources with Citation



Johnston, F. B., photographer. (1899) [Kennebec Ice horse-drawn wagon parked in front of Birney Public School - school children lined up with teacher behind wagon as man shows them large chunk of ice suspended by tongs, Washington, D.C.]. Washington, D.C, 1899. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001702335/>



Harris & Ewing, photographer. (1920) [Horses]. United States, 1920. [or 1921] [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/hec2013011485/>.



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Ice Box on West Wall of Kitchen, First Floor—Woodrow Wilson House. [No Date Recorded on Caption Card] [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/dc0104.photos.027519p/>.

## Suggestions for Teachers

**Science Activities:** How long does it take for ice to melt? How do we make ice cubes?

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/object-project/refrigerators/ice-cubes>

<https://amhistory.atavist.com/adventures-with-objects>

**Visual Literacy Activity:** Work with the images from the Library of Congress collection: Cutting ice on the Ottaqueechee River, Coos County and create a chronological digital story about harvesting ice.

**History Activity:** What technology/invention replaced the need for ice delivery?

<https://www.loc.gov/photos/?q=refrigerator>

**Critical Thinking activity:** How safe is the ice to eat? How safe is the ice to keep your icebox cold? Explore Typhoid Germ Hunter *New-York tribune*. (New York [N.Y.]), 08 March 1903. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1903-03-08/ed-1/seq-29/>>

Flickr Link [http://www.flickr.com/photos/library\\_of\\_congress/4158719744/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress/4158719744/)

*Kelvinator Ad. New-York tribune*. (New York [N.Y.]), 30 Jan. 1921. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1921-01-30/ed-1/seq-57/>>

**Critical Thinking Activity:** How is Ice Delivered Today?

Ice Delivery Videos Compare Past and Present

Reddy Ice: Delivery Driver <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBs2vKh68-s>

Home City Ice Delivery Driver <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dw8bJHBTj2A>

**Civics Activity:** How do community helpers affect our everyday lives? How do different types of jobs within a community make it possible for communities to function together? What are the duties, uniforms, responsibilities, place of businesses and tools community helpers use? How have these changed over time? Explore primary sources featuring other community helpers, such as police officers, firefighters, mail carriers, street cleaners, lifeguards, nurses, veterinarians, physicians, telephone operators, and many others.

## Additional Resources

### Trade Books

Appelbaum, D. (1997). *Cocoa ice*. New York: Orchard Books.

Christiansen, C. (1993). *Ice horse*. New York: Dial.

Geisert, A. (2011). *Ice*. Brooklyn, NY: Enchanted Lion.

Kalman, B. (2014). *Community helpers then and now*. New York, NY: Crabtree Publishing Co.

Pringle, L. (2012). *Ice!: The amazing history of the ice business*. Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek.

### Maine Historical Society

*Ice: A Maine Commodity*

<https://www.mainememory.net/sitebuilder/site/773/page/1182/display>

### Smithsonian

Keeping your (food) cool: From ice harvesting to electric refrigeration

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/ice-harvesting-electric-refrigeration>

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/object-project/refrigerators/ice-tongs>

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/object-project/learning-resources/videos>

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/object-project/refrigerators/ice-cubes>

### Library of Congress

Video: Cutting and canaling ice (1902) <https://www.loc.gov/item/00564559>

Video: Circular panorama of housing the ice (1902)

<https://www.loc.gov/item/00564558/>

Ice harvesting, Conneaut Lake, Pa.: Marking the cakes for cutting (1907)

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b18846/>

Ice harvesting, shooting the cakes into the house (1903)

<https://www.loc.gov/item/det1994004921/PP/>

Cutting ice on the Ottaqueechee River, Coos County, New Hampshire (1936)

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8a07972/>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997007953/PP/>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997007952/PP/>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997007958/PP/>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997007956/PP/>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997007950/PP/>

Icing soft drink refrigerator in general store. Lake Dick Project, Arkansas (1938)

<https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa2000012690/PP/>

Knickerbocker Co. cutting ice. Rockland Lake (1846)

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003664233/>

Rockland Lake - cutting ice. View from the north east (1845)

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003664235/>

Scraping ice for cutting (1910-1915)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/ggbain.11584/>

Ice lines (between 1909 and 1920)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/npsc.20496/>

Loading ice (between ca. 1910 and ca. 1915)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/ggbain.11583/>

Ice harvesting (1903)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/det.4a05655/>

Lincoln, Nebraska. Ice wagon (1942)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8c36212/>

Glasgow, Montana. Ice wagon (1942)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8a33396/>

Free ice in New York (1900)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/det.4a09036/>

Hauling out the ice blocks (1870)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3a43936/>

Soup-house for ice-cutters (between ca. 1910 and ca. 1915)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/ggbain.11585/>

Ice for sale. Harlingen, Texas (1939)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8b37254/>

Ice man. New York City (1941)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8b16091/>

Ice harvesting, Conneaut Lake, Pa.: Ice cakes in the elevator being carried into ice house (1907)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b18844/>

Licking blocks of ice on hot day (1912)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsc.00148/>

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b02842/>

Scraped Ice Seller on Hot Day (between ca. 1910 and ca. 1915)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/ggbain.09813/>

The iceman (1923)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3a27530/>

San Bernardino, California. Workman handling ice in the storage room at the ice plant (1943)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8d27650/>

[Horse-drawn ice wagon and several persons, two with blocks of ice, standing in street in front of residence] (1899 or 1900)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.08776/>

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b17331/>

[Filling ice house at Mt. Kineo, Moosehead Lake, Maine] (1889)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b03893/>

New York, New York. Ice man on Mott Street (1943)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8d24261/>

Ice and icing tools in freight car. Alamo, Texas (1939)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8b37101/>

[Girls working on ice wagon.] Location: New York, New York (State) (1912)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/nclc.04279/>

Dumping ice into a milk truck at the United Farmers' Cooperative Creamery (1941)

<https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa2000027319/PP/>

### News Articles: Chronicling America

*Harvesting the Ice Crop for Omaha. Omaha daily bee.* (Omaha [Neb.]), 06 Feb. 1916.

*Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.* Lib. of Congress.

<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1916-02-06/ed-1/seq-19/>>

*Omaha's Big Ice Crop: How it is being harvested. Omaha daily bee.* (Omaha [Neb.]), 22 Jan. 1905. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.* Lib. of Congress.

<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1905-01-22/ed-1/seq-20/>>

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